

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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FM AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1005

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L MOGADISCIO 0989

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR US SO

SUBJ: US- SOMALI RELATIONS

1. SUMMARY: SOMALI VICE PRESIDENT STATES RELATIONS WITH US ARE LOOKING UP. AT SAME TIME, HE STRESSES CONTINUING SOMALI CONCERN OVER ETHIOPIAN INTENTIONS AND US ROLE IN CURRENT TENSION.

2. IN LONG, CORDIAL TALK DURING AMBASSADOR LOORAM' S FAREWELL CALL ON VICE PRESIDENT COLONEL ISMAIL ALI ABOKOR JULY 3, LATTER WAS VERY FLATTERING RE ALLEGED SUCCESS OF AMBASSADOR' S MISSION AND STATED RELATIONS HAD SIGNIFICANTLY IMPROVED OVER PAST YEAR. ALL OF SRC HAD REGISTERED STRONG REGRET WHEN PRE-SIDENT ANNOUNCED AMBASSADOR' S IMMINENT DEPARTURE. THEY THOUGHT IT BOTH UNTIMELY AND UNFORTUNATE.

3. VP SAID ONLY CONTINUING PROBLEM IN US- SOMALI RELATIONS WAS AMERICAN MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO ETHIOPIA. THIS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT NOW IN LIGHT ETHIOPIA' S CURRENT SHOW OF FORCE ON DE FACTO BORDER. SOMALIA REMAINED VERY WORRIED ABOUT ETHIOPIAN INTENTIONS. WITHOUT GIVING ANY REASON, EMPEROR HAD CUT OFF HIS DIALOGUE WITH SIAD, WHICH AT ONE POINT LOOKED AS

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IF IT MIGHT BE PRODUCTIVE. INSTEAD, ETHIOPIA HAD SENT HEAVY REINFORCEMENTS INTO OGADEN.

4. SOMALIS, HE SAID, WERE TIGHTLY CONTROLLING THEIR OWN TROOPS NEAR BORDER, BUT HE STRONGLY DOUBTED THAT EMPEROR HAD SIMILARLY SHORT REIN ON HIS MILITARY. STATEMENTS ALLEGEDLY MADE BY KETEMA YIFRU IN UGANDA IMPLIED THAT ETHIOPIAN GENERALS WERE CHAFING AT THE BIT. AS MINIMUM THERE WAS GRAVE DANGER OF INCIDENT WHICH COULD READILY ESCALATE WITHOUT ANYBODY PERHAPS WANTING IT.

5. VP ASSERTED THAT ETHIOPIAN FEARS OF SOMALI ATTACK WERE WHOLLY UNFOUNDED AND " EMPEROR DEEP DOWN KNOWS IT." NOT ONLY WAS IT RIDICULOUS TO THINK SOMALIA COULD TAKE ON A COUNTRY OF ETHIOPIA'S SIZE AND RESOURCES BUT ALSO SOMALI GOVERNMENT NEEDED PEACE TO DEVELOP ITS COUNTRY. IT WAS DETERMINED, MOREOVER, TO WORK OUT PROBLEMS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS PEACEFULLY.

6. THIS WAS WHY, HE SAID, IT WAS SO IMPORTANT THAT DIALOGUE WITH ETHIOPIA BE RESUMED. NO MATTER HOW AWKWARD OR DISTASTEFUL IT WAS FOR ETHIOPIA TO ADMIT THAT PROBLEM EXISTED, IT WAS STILL BETTER TO TALK IT OVER RATHER THAN TO THREATEN. AND ETHIOPIANS WOULD PROBABLY DO SO WERE IT NOT FOR US MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND THE FEELING OF SUPERIORITY THIS GAVE ETHIOPIANS. PROBLEM WOULD CERTAINLY NOT GO AWAY. SOMALIS IN ETHIOPIA HAD NEVER BEEN ASSIMILATED BY ETHIOPIANS AND NEVER WOULD BE. AND SHOW OF FORCE, WITH ALL THIS ENTAILED, ONLY SERVED TO AGGRAVATE NATIONALISTIC FEELINGS OF SOMALI POPULATION OF OGADEN. " THEY (THESE FEELINGS) HAVE NEVER BEEN STRONGER."

7. LASTLY, VP SAID, USG MIGHT THINK SOMALI REGIME HAD " TILTED" TOWARD EAST BECAUSE OF ASSISTANCE IT RECEIVING FROM USSR AND CHINA. HOWEVER AT SAME TIME, HE POINTED OUT, SOMALIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITALY WERE " EXCELLENT." SOMALIA WOULD NOT " TILT" EAST OR WEST. THEY WERE OUT FOR THEMSELVES AND HAD NO INTENTION OF FALLING UNDER DOMINATION OF ANY OUTSIDE POWER IN THE PROCESS. AND SOCIALIST POLICIES WERE SIMPLY WAY OF GALVANIZING POPULATION AND GETTING THEM TO WORK AND DEVELOP THEIR COUNTRY.

8. COMMENT: INTERESTING THAT USUALLY TACITURE VP, ONE OF
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KEY FIGURES IN REGIME, WAS FRIENDLY AND OUTSPOKEN. IT IS REPORTED THAT HE AND COLONEL SULEMEIN ARE CURRENTLY WORRIED ABOUT RENEWED SOVIET BACKING OF RIVAL VP GENERAL SAMANTAR. MORE IMPORTANT, BELIEVE ISMAIL'S REMARKS PROBABLY REFLECT CURRENT ATTITUDE OF MANY SRC MEMBERS, INCLUDING PRESIDENT SIAD, WHICH FAVORS MORE EVEN BALANCE IN SOMALIA'S FOREIGN RELATIONS AND THUS BETTER RELATIONS WITH WEST IN GENERAL AND US IN PAR-

TICULAR. BUT THE OLD PROBLEM WITH ETHIOPIA AND THE CURRENT
TENSIONS STILL COLOR ALL ATTITUDES.
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